

# Bramhall Sword Club – Child Protection Policy

**Author:** Lucy Turner

**Reviewed by:** Bob Merry

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At Bramhall Sword Club the following members hold the following positions

**Welfare Officer:** Lucy Turner

**Club Chairman:** Bob Merry

Bramhall Sword Club recognises the responsibility that it has to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable young adults. All members and volunteers are required to adhere to the Bramhall Sword Club Child Protection Policy, and the British Fencing Child Protection Policy as detailed below:

## Introduction

British Fencing and Bramhall Sword Club believe that:

- the welfare of any child is paramount
- anyone, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity has the right to protection from abuse
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

British Fencing and Bramhall Sword Club recognises that members of clubs/organisations, whether they are staff or volunteers, are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, and therefore they have put in place a structure that will support them and most importantly protect the child.

Everyone in British Fencing and Bramhall Sword Club has a duty of care to safeguard children involved in activities from harm.

Everyone has a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. British Fencing and Bramhall Sword Club will do their utmost to ensure the safety and protection of all everyone involved in any fencing activity whether that is at clubs, events and competitions, trips, activity sessions or anywhere else that fencing takes place. With this in mind a series of policies and procedures have been put in place to support and create guidance for everyone.

## Definitions

**A child** is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

**Position of Trust** – refers to anyone with a position of responsibility over a child.

Sexual offences legislation states that any sexual activity involving children under 16 is unlawful. The primary motivation for legislation that addresses the abuse of positions of trust is the need to protect young people aged 16 and 17 who, despite reaching the age of consent for sexual activity, are considered to be vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, in defined circumstances.

The law defines specific roles and settings where sexual activity between 16 and 17 year olds and those in positions of trust, responsibility or authority constitutes a criminal offence. Examples of specific roles include: - teachers, connexions personal advisors, foster carers. Examples of specific settings include: - educational institutions, residential care homes, hospitals, youth offender institutions.

At this time, sport is not specifically included in the definition of position of trust, although some people working in sport may be operating in schools or other locations and therefore come under the legislation. Under British Fencing's Child Protection Policy, any person in a

position of trust having a sexual relationship with a young person under 18 would be deemed to be in breach of the code of conduct

**Regulated Activity** - this includes anyone who is undertaking unsupervised activity in: teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children, or providing advice / guidance on well-being, or driving a vehicle only for children. It also includes people who are working in "specified places" – for example schools, children's homes, childcare premises, but not those who are supervised volunteers. In both instances this only covers instances where the activity is done regularly by the same person, ie once a week or on 4 or more days in a 30 day period or overnight.

## Definitions of Abuse

There are four main types of abuse. These are:

**Physical Abuse** – this may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Examples of physical abuse in sport may be when a child is forced into training and competition that exceeds the capacity of his or her immature and growing body; or where a child is given drugs to enhance performance or delay puberty.

**Sexual Abuse** – involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

In sport, coaching techniques that involve physical contact with children can potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power of the coach over young performers, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.

**Emotional Abuse** – is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Examples of emotional abuse in sport include subjecting children to constant criticism, name calling, and sarcasm or bullying. Putting them under consistent pressure to perform to unrealistically high standards is also a form of emotional abuse.

**Neglect** – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical harm and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care – givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Examples of neglect in sport could include: not ensuring children are safe; exposing them to undue cold or heat, or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

## **Policy aims**

The aim of our Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice. Bramhall Sword Club will do this by a number of means including:

- providing children, young people with appropriate safety and protection
- allowing all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific issues
- promoting good practice.

## **Promoting good practice**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions. Bramhall Sword Club recognises that it is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with our judgement about the appropriate action to take. By having a strong framework in place, we believe that this will reduce the judgements that people have to make.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment.

Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Bramhall Sword Club hopes that a child who has been subject to abuse outside of fencing will find the support that they need with an aim of the crucial role of improving their self-esteem. Bramhall Sword Club will work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that they receive the required support.

## **Good practice guidelines**

Everyone should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. With this in mind, we expect everyone involved in fencing to follow the following common sense guidelines.

Bramhall Sword Club expects people when working with children to:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Treat everyone equally, and with respect and dignity
- Always put their welfare first. This is way more important than winning or achieving goals
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empowers them to share in the decision making process
- Make sport fun, enjoyable and promote fair play
- Ensure that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the fencer is constantly moving. Fencers, and if appropriate carers and/or their parents should always be consulted and their agreement gained
- Keep up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, we will always ensure supervisors work in pairs
- Ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. Bramhall Sword Club recognises, however, that same gender abuse can also occur
- Ensure that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter anyone's rooms unaccompanied or invite children into their rooms

- Be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol while “on duty”
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of our fencers - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- Secure parental/carers consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given
- Request written parental consent if officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

Bramhall Sword Club will do its best to avoid the following although it knows that there are times when these are unavoidable. If any of these happen, then they will be done with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child’s parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- avoid spending time alone with children away from others
- avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity.

Bramhall Sword Club will not allow or condone the following to happen. No one should:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- share a room with a child
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

Bramhall Sword Club knows that sometimes it may be necessary for members or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for someone, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents/carers and the fencer involved.

These tasks may include situations where they are helping to dress or undress a fencer, where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities.

Bramhall Sword Club expects a person carrying out these tasks to:

- be responsive to a person’s reactions
- talk with them about what is happening and give choices where possible
- avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which they are not appropriately trained.

## **Safeguarding Disabled Fencers**

Research has shown that disabled children are up to 4 times as likely to be abused as a non-disabled child. Deaf and disabled children may be especially vulnerable to abuse for a number of reasons including:

- increased likelihood of social isolation
- fewer outside contacts than children without a disability
- dependency on others for practical assistance in daily living (including intimate care)
- impaired capacity to resist, avoid or understand abuse
- speech and language communication needs may make it difficult to tell others what is happening

- limited access to someone to disclose to
- particular vulnerability to bullying.

Bramhall Sword Club will take particular care to protect their more vulnerable participants in fencing and take action if any information is given relating to a disabled participant.

## **Reporting and Recording an incident**

If any of the following occur, the incident should be reported immediately to the Club's Welfare Officer. Parents of the child should be informed if:

- a fencer is accidentally hurt by a coach, volunteer or official
- if he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if a player appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a player misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

If abuse or poor practice is suspected then the club's Welfare Officer should be informed and provided with a written report. The report must be an accurate and detailed record which is prepared at the time of the disclosure/concern. It should include the following:

- the child's name, age and date of birth
- the child's home address and telephone number
- who has initiated the reporting of the allegation
- the nature of the allegation such as dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information
- a clear distinction should be made between what is fact, opinion or hearsay and as far as possible the child's own words should be used
- a description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Reference should also be made to any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of any witnesses to the incidents.
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- whether the parents/carers have been contacted
- what details have been provided to the parents/carers
- whether anyone else has been consulted and if yes have the details should be recorded
- if the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to and the details recorded?
- details of any alleged abuser.

The first point of contact for any concerns of abuse should be to the club Welfare Officer. If the allegation arises from within Bramhall Sword Club (i.e about a coach or volunteer) the club Welfare Officer will assess the immediate safety of the child and decide whether to contact the Police or refer the case to British Fencing. A detailed report of the incident will be prepared. Once a concern is logged with British Fencing, in most instances the case will be handed to a Case Management Group to decide on the best course of action.

If the allegation arises from outside of Bramhall Sword Club (i.e about a relative or family friend) the club Welfare Officer will assess the immediate safety of the child and decide whether to contact either the Police or Children's Social Care. A detailed report of the incident will be prepared and the concern will be logged with British Fencing as above.

## **Child Protection and Social Media**

Bramhall Sword Club recognises that use of the Internet, multimedia devices, digital imaging facilities and social media as a means of communication are part of today's society. However a child's welfare remains the priority of the club.

The use of social media can be a valuable tool to promote the club's activities. In order to minimise the risk of abuse and negative consequences from the use of social media, Bramhall Sword Club has prepared the following guidelines:

### **Guidance for members/volunteers in a position of trust and responsibility**

- Members and volunteers in a position of trust and/or responsibility (as defined above) should not be in contact with young people through social networking sites if they hold such a position in respect of that individual young person
- should a young person in the club request to become a named friend on a social media site the request should be declined if any of the following apply
  - You are in a position of responsibility in respect of that child.
  - You hold a position of trust and responsibility in the club.
  - Your contact with the child is through the club and the parent/guardian of the child does not give their consent to such contact.

Social networking sites should never be used as a medium by which to abuse or criticise British Fencing, British Fencing members or Bramhall Sword Club and to do so would be in breach of British Fencing Standards of Conduct.

The publishing of a photograph or video footage on a social networking site is governed by the same requirements as any other media – see the British Fencing Photography Policy in the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy.

### **Guidance for coaches who have children that they coach in the club**

The issue has been raised that parents are becoming members of social networking sites that their children sign up to for security reasons in order to ensure the wellbeing of their own child by being able to view their child's site. This will give the parent access via their child's site to all children listed as friends of their child. It would not be appropriate for Bramhall Sword Club to prevent a parent who is also a coach in his/her child's club from using this form of protection for their child's online activities.

Therefore in such cases the coach can:

- Have fencers in the club on the site he / she is accessing providing the Bramhall Sword Club under 18 year old club members on the site are listed as friends of his / her child;

However, in this case the following also applies:

- The coach concerned should not have direct contact with fencers other than their own child through the social networking site;
- The coach should not accept such fencers as friends on his / her home site; and
- The coach should inform the Club Welfare Officer of this arrangement.

### **Coaches/Judges/Club officials who are under 18**

Bramhall Sword Club recognises that social networking sites can be a useful tool for judges, coaches and officials within British Fencing clubs to share information with other judges, coaches or officials. If, however, the judge or official is under the age of 18 while they may be a colleague, the requirements above must be adhered to.

However, for young people aged 16 or 17 it is the view of British Fencing, that to restrict the ability to share professional information with them from other coaches, judges or officials may be detrimental in their professional development in their role in British Fencing.

Therefore in such cases if the parent of a young person in a position of responsibility aged 16/17 and the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult club officer or coach for the purposes of sharing professional information relevant to their role the following should apply:

- gain written consent of the parent/guardian and young person to have such contact naming the individual adult and social networking site concerned;
- the named adult must sign an agreement to keep the contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role in the club;
- all such communications should be shared with an identified 3rd person (e.g. the young person's parent/guardian or club welfare officer); and
- if the young person or the adult is found to breach the above agreement, action must be taken by the club to address the concern and/or the breach referred to British Fencing or the statutory agencies if appropriate.

### **Guidance for Bramhall Sword Club members under the age of 18**

1. Do not ask your coach, judge, helper/volunteer or club official to be your social networking site friend – they will refuse - as that would breach good practice and the Bramhall Sword Club Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy.
2. Use the internet positively and do not place yourself at risk.
3. Consider who you are inviting to be your friend and follow the good advice of the social networking sites to ensure you are talking to the person you believe you are talking to.
4. Always remember that anything you say including photos, pictures and video clips posted on your site may be shared with people other than those for whom it was intended.
5. Never post or send any photographs, videos or make comments that may be:
  - Hurtful, untrue and upsetting and you may regret sharing later on; or
  - Used by other people in a way you did not intend or want.
6. Do not put pictures of other club members on the site within the club setting as you may breach the British Fencing Photography Policy. If you do wish to upload such a picture you must get advice and consent of your parent, the other young person and their parent and a club officer before even considering uploading such a photo. This will not prevent you having pictures of your Fencing friends on your site taken outside of the sporting arena but it is good advice to ensure that they and their parents are happy with any picture you have of them on your site.
7. Always be aware that social networking sites are a method of communication like letter writing and the spoken word. They are bound by the same laws and rules. Such technology is instant and this allows you as the user to react in the 'heat of the moment', where in the past you would have been required to write a letter which would have taken time and allowed for you to think again before sending. So never place a comment on the internet that you would not put in writing or say to the individual concerned as to do so may not only breach British Fencing Policy but also the law.

### **Social networking services, social media and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people**

The CPSU Briefing Document "Social networking services, social media and sport: Guidelines for safeguarding children and young people" gives more in depth guidance on social networking sites. It can be accessed via the Child Protection in Sport Unit website at:

[www.cpsu.org.uk](http://www.cpsu.org.uk)

## What to do if you have concerns

As a user of a social networking site, whether you are a child or an adult, you may at some time have a concern about what you are seeing or being told about by another user. Concerns may range from negative or abusive comments, and cyber bullying to suspected grooming for sexual abuse.

British Fencing has drawn up a list below of agencies that you can contact, anonymously if you wish, where you can raise such concerns.

- [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) : the main UK Government website with advice for parents on how to keep children safe online
- [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk) : the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is the Government body dedicated to eradicating abuse of children. Concerns about inappropriate contacts between a child and an adult, including online, can be reported directly to CEOP. Reporting can be accessed by pressing the CEOP button on the British Fencing website's CEOP page.
- [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk) : the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) works to remove illegal material from the internet. If you have found any material you believe to be illegal e.g. child sex abuse images, other obscene material or material that incites racial hatred, you can report it to the IWF.

A number of specialist websites contain general advice that may be of help to parents.

These include

- [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk), [www.nch.org.uk](http://www.nch.org.uk), [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk) and [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org).

Other sites can offer parents support on broader issues. These include

- [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)
- British Fencing through the Safeguarding Hotline on 07526 003030 or by email [equality@britishfencing.com](mailto:equality@britishfencing.com)
- Childline 0800 1111 or [www.Childline.org.uk](http://www.Childline.org.uk) is another NSPCC support service. Using this website, children can talk confidentially to NSPCC advisors online about any issues or problems they may be experiencing, using an application similar to Instant Messenger (IM).
- Stop It Now Freephone 0808 1000 900 or [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)
- The Local Police or Children's Services – their numbers can be found in the phone book